Category: GEOGRAPHY 1. Why are earthquakes frequent in Afghanistan?

Syllabus: Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclones etc.Mains: Understanding the causes of frequent earthquakes in a region.Prelims: About Earthquakes

Context

Afghanistan experienced a recent earthquake of magnitude 6.3 following a series of tremors. Frequent earthquakes are not new to the region, and the country's history includes devastating quakes. Understanding the geological factors causing these earthquakes is crucial.

Introduction

- Afghanistan has recently been hit by a series of destructive earthquakes, with the most recent one having a magnitude of 6.3.
- The Afghan government has provided conflicting figures for the death toll, causing uncertainty in reporting.

Frequency of Earthquakes in Afghanistan

- Earthquakes are not new to Afghanistan, and the country has a history of experiencing devastating tremors.
- Notable earthquakes in the past include a 6.1 magnitude quake in 2022, resulting in over 1,000 casualties, and a major earthquake in 2015 that killed over 200 people in Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan.

How Do Earthquakes Occur?

- Earth's surface is divided into tectonic plates. Fault lines, which are fractures along these plates, are created due to tectonic forces and stress.
- Earthquakes happen when segments of these plates suddenly shift, releasing energy and generating seismic waves through the ground.
- The fault plane is where the lithosphere chunks slide and the earthquake's origin point is the focus or hypocentre, while the surface point above it is the epicentre.

Tectonic Activity in Afghanistan

- Afghanistan is situated in a region where the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates meet, leading to frequent earthquakes.
- Western Afghanistan experiences the Arabian plate subducting northward under Eurasia, while the Indian plate does the same in the east.
- This geological complexity is amplified in the Hindu Kush mountain range and the Pamir Knot, where these plates interact.
- The ongoing northward movement of the Indian Plate contributes to the compression and uplift of the Himalayas, transmitting tectonic stress across the region, and causing crust deformation, fault creation, and earthquakes.
- Afghanistan is crisscrossed by various active fault systems such as the Chaman Fault and the Main Pamir Thrust, which are major sources of earthquakes in the region.

Nut Graf: Afghanistan's susceptibility to frequent earthquakes due to the complex interaction of tectonic plates at its borders and within the region poses significant geological risks.

Category: GOVERNANCE1. Why SLLs also need to be reformed

Syllabus: Government policies and interventions aimed at development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Mains: Legal reforms and the need for reforming Special and Local Laws

Context

The article highlights the importance of including Special and Local Laws (SLLs) in criminal law reforms in India, given their substantial role in the legal landscape.

Introduction

- Recent bills on criminal laws aim to reform substantive criminal law codified in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and Indian Evidence Act (IEA).
- However, the focus has been primarily on general criminal law, while a significant aspect of criminal laws lies within Special and Local Laws (SLLs).

Significance of Special and Local Laws (SLLs)

- SLLs are highly relevant in India's criminal justice system, accounting for approximately 39.9% of all cognizable offences registered in 2021.
- They have sparked critical debates concerning the limits of the state's power in criminalization and the impact on individual rights and liberties.

Reform Needs in SLLs

- SLLs suffer from vague definitions and ambiguity, exemplified by laws like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA).
- Concerns have arisen about criminalising conduct through SLLs that would otherwise be considered civil or regulatory offences, like consensual activities between minors.
- Due process values are being diluted through SLLs, granting authorities expanded search and seizure powers and allowing the admissibility of confessions recorded by police officers.
- Stringent bail provisions in various SLLs make securing bail nearly impossible.

A Shift in Criminal Laws

- Over time, there has been a significant shift in the landscape of criminal laws with a surge in SLL enactments.
- This shift differs from the original concept of comprehensive codification, as seen in the Indian Penal Code.
- The IPC was initially envisioned as an all-inclusive collection of rules, a "Pannomion," containing all criminal laws.
- Although the IPC is criticised for archaic and colonial elements, the idea of codification within it has been successful.

The Need for Comprehensive Reforms

- SLLs that criminalise or aim to criminalise specific conduct should be incorporated as separate chapters within the existing penal code.
- The procedural elements associated with Special and Local Laws (SLLs), covering aspects like reporting of offences, arrest, investigation, prosecution, trial, evidence, and bail, should be incorporated either as distinct procedures within the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) or as special cases within its standard provisions.
- Omitting the substantive and procedural aspects of SLLs from ongoing reform initiatives is a significant limitation.
- Second-generation reforms are necessary to address these gaps and ensure the comprehensive reform of India's criminal laws.

Nut Graf: While India's recent criminal law reform bills address general laws, there's a significant gap in considering Special and Local Laws (SLLs). These laws are essential in the country's criminal justice system and have triggered crucial debates about individual rights and liberties. There is a need for comprehensive reform, including both substantive and procedural aspects of SLLs, to ensure a more holistic transformation of India's criminal laws.

1. The shape of climate justice in a warming India

Syllabus: Conservation, Environmental pollution and degradation Mains: Implications of climate justice in the context of India's energy transition.

Context: The G-20 summit held in Delhi in September 2023 set ambitious targets for renewable energy capacity and energy efficiency improvement. The Delhi Declaration – Tripling of renewables and doubling of the rate of energy efficiency by 2030.

- While there was consensus on many issues, the phasing out of fossil fuels remained contentious.
- The principles of climate justice and internalizing costs for emissions have been discussed at the international level, but their domestic impact within India is often overlooked.

What is climate justice?

- "Climate justice" is a term, and more than that a movement, that acknowledges climate change can have differing social, economic, public health, and other adverse impacts on underprivileged populations.
- Advocates for climate justice are striving to have these inequities addressed head-on through long-term mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Impact within India:

- **Inequality Matrix:** Climate change and energy transition disproportionately affect the poor in India. Agrarian crises, droughts, and extreme climate events directly impact agricultural productivity, leading to income loss for farmers. Fishing communities are also suffering due to the rising ocean temperatures.
- **Economic Inequality:** Less equitable societies tend to have higher emissions per unit of economic activity. India's highly unequal economic structure contributes to this issue, making the cost of carbon emissions much higher in such contexts.
- **Greening Development:** India's energy transition policies, aimed at clean energy, may exacerbate existing class, caste, and regional disparities. Sectors like manufacturing, which are more energy- and carbon-intensive, are sensitive to energy price increases.
- **Just Transition:** The shift to renewable energy should focus on protecting livelihoods, creating alternative job opportunities, and ensuring vulnerable communities are not adversely affected. This requires a holistic approach that considers economic, social, and regional inequalities.
- **Greening Federalism:** The divide in economic inequality in India correlates with the energy source divide. Coal-rich regions are generally economically poorer, while renewable energy hubs are in wealthier areas. The coal sector is a significant source of revenue for state governments, and the transition strategy must address these regional inequalities.

Green development

- India's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) – 40% of installed energy capacity is clean energy. Net Zero emissions by 2070.
- As of 2021 – Coal was the major energy contributor – 56%; crude oil – 33%

Significance:

- Addressing climate justice issues is crucial for India's sustainable and equitable development.
- Inequalities in emissions and socio-economic factors are interlinked, and failing to address them simultaneously can hinder effective climate action.
- India's ambitious energy transition goals must consider the impact on the livelihoods of the poor and the existing disparities among different segments of the population.

Way Forward:

- **Holistic Approach:** India's energy transition must consider economic, social, and regional disparities. While promoting renewable energy is essential, it should not exacerbate existing inequalities. Protecting livelihoods, offering alternative job opportunities, and reducing inequality should be central to the transition strategy.
- **Green Investment:** Transitioning to renewables requires investment in green job creation and skill development. Strategies should focus on reducing inequality and promoting green investment simultaneously.
- **Federal Deal:** India's federal governance structure implies that state governments play a significant role in addressing climate concerns. To tackle regional inequalities, the transition strategy should transfer funds to coal-dependent states and create State-specific programs for reskilling and local rehabilitation.
- **Policy Alignment:** Aligning policies at the national and sub-national levels is essential. State governments should cooperate with the union government to ensure that climate justice and adaptation measures are in sync with local development aspirations.

Nut Graf: While India has set ambitious targets for renewable energy, it must ensure that the transition addresses existing inequalities and doesn't adversely impact the livelihoods of the poor. A just transition requires a holistic approach that considers economic, social, and regional disparities and cooperation between the central and state governments to achieve a sustainable and equitable future.

1. An opportunity to recast India's food system

Syllabus: Issues relating to poverty and hunger Mains: Challenges of India's food system and measures to be taken.

Context: World Food Day, celebrated on October 16, emphasizes the importance of viewing food as a comprehensive system. India, with its immense population, faces unique challenges in maintaining a sustainable and resilient food system.

- Achieving nutrition security for all is a primary goal, which is intricately linked to the economic returns of food producers and the resilience of natural ecosystems.

Issues:

- **Double Burden of Malnutrition:** India faces the challenge of both nutrient deficiencies and obesity. A significant portion of the population exhibits nutrient deficiencies, while unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles have led to rising obesity rates.
- **Insufficient Farm Incomes:** Many small and marginal farmers struggle to make ends meet, often resorting to non-farm activities. This situation is exacerbated by a lack of skills and income diversification opportunities.
- **Depleting Natural Resources:** The depletion of natural resources like soil health and groundwater, along with the impact of climate change, threatens the resilience of India's food production.

Realities on the ground

- **As per NFHS 2019-21:**
  - 35% of children are stunted; 57% of women and 25% of men are anaemic.
  - 24% of adult women & 23% of adult men are obese.
- More than 68% of the marginal farmers supplement their income from non-farm activities.

Significance:

- Revamping India's food system is crucial for ensuring nutrition security, improving farm incomes, and safeguarding the environment.
- Achieving these objectives requires a holistic approach that engages consumers, producers, and middlemen in the food supply chain.

Way Forward:

- **Shift Consumer Demand:** Encourage consumers to adopt healthier and more sustainable diets. Collaboration between the private sector, civil society, health communities, and social media influencers can promote locally-grown, nutritious options. Public sector initiatives like the Public Distribution System and institutional procurement can also play a role in improving food choices.
- **Support Farmers' Transition:** Promote remunerative and regenerative agricultural practices. Increase funding for sustainable agriculture initiatives, broaden support for agroecological practices, and shift from input subsidies to direct cash support per hectare. Agricultural research and extension services should focus on sustainable practices.
- **Sustainable Value Chains:** Make farm-to-fork value chains more sustainable and inclusive. Encourage middlemen and corporations to procure directly from farmers and prioritize sustainably harvested produce. Facilitate trading of produce between Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) to ensure a greater share of value for farmers.

Nut Graf: India's food system is at a crossroads, facing challenges related to nutrition, farm incomes, and environmental sustainability. A comprehensive approach that involves consumers, producers, and middlemen is essential for transforming the food system. While the scale of the challenge is significant, India has a unique opportunity to demonstrate how a sustainable and resilient food system can be achieved, setting an example for the rest of the world.

1. Southwest monsoon withdraws from India
Syllabus: GS 1- Geography Prelims: Southwest and northeast monsoons

Introduction

- The southwest monsoon has concluded, and the onset of the northeast monsoon is anticipated within the next 72 hours, as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD).
- The northeast monsoon, also known as the 'retreating monsoon,' is expected to be relatively weak during its onset.

Transition from Southwest Monsoon

- The southwest monsoon began withdrawing from Rajasthan on September 25, which was about a week later than the usual withdrawal date of September 17.
- Although the withdrawal begins in Rajasthan, it takes until early to mid-October to fully retreat, making way for the northeast monsoon.

Monsoon Rainfall Statistics

- India officially considers rainfall received from June 1 to September 30 as monsoon rainfall.
- By September 30, India had received 94% of the expected rainfall from the four monsoon months, slightly below the IMD's forecast of 96% but still within the forecast margin.
- Rainfall ranging from 96% to 104% of the long-term average is classified as 'normal.'
- The 2023 monsoon experienced an El Niño effect leading to a dry August, partially offset by higher-than-expected rainfall in September.

Northeast Monsoon Forecast

- In early October, the IMD predicted a 'normal' northeast monsoon for the period from October to December.
- Large parts of northwest India and the southern peninsula are expected to receive 'normal to above-normal rainfall' during this season.
- States like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and parts of Andhra Pradesh depend on the northeast monsoon for significant rainfall, even though it accounts for only about 11% of India's annual precipitation.
- Past experiences have shown extreme variability, with 2015 witnessing heavy rains and flooding in Chennai, while the 2019 northeast monsoon was weak and contributed to severe water shortages.

Cyclone Developments

- The IMD has reported two low-pressure areas developing, which are precursors to cyclones.
- These low-pressure areas are in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, with projections suggesting they could intensify into 'depressions' by October 21, though their potential to develop into larger cyclones remains uncertain.

2. India's share of growth to rise to 18%

Syllabus: GS 3- Economy Prelims: India's projected growth and contribution to global GDP.

Introduction

- India's contribution to global economic growth is expected to rise by 2 percentage points over the next five years due to the country's projected faster economic growth, according to a senior International Monetary Fund (IMF) official.
- Currently, China and India together contribute 50% to global growth, with India's share at 16%. This share is forecasted to grow to 18% within five years.

Asia-Pacific Region's Growth

- The Asia-Pacific region is considered a relatively bright spot in the global economic environment, with an expected economic growth of 4.6% in 2023 and 4.2% in 2024.
- The region is set to contribute around two-thirds of global growth, and India's growth is cited as a contributing factor to this positive outlook.

India's Strong Economic Growth

- India's economic growth remains robust, with a projected growth rate of 6.3% for the fiscal year 2023/24.
- This growth is supported by strong government capital expenditure, some private sector investment, and sustained consumption growth, despite weakening external demand.

Inflation and Fiscal Deficit

- Retail inflation in India is moderating, with headline inflation returning within the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) tolerance band.
- The government of India is expected to meet its fiscal deficit target of 5.9% in FY24.
- Revenue is anticipated to reach budgeted levels, and the budget can absorb unexpected expenditure increases in certain areas.

IMF's Monetary Stance Recommendation: The IMF has recommended that countries maintain a sufficiently restrictive monetary stance until inflation is firmly under control.

1. Mahsa Amini, given EU human rights award

Introduction

- Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman who died in police custody in Iran in 2022, has been posthumously honoured with the European Union's top human rights prize.
- The EU prize, bearing the name of Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, was established in 1988 to acknowledge those who champion human rights and basic freedoms, whether as individuals or groups.
- Andrei Sakharov, who was also a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, passed away in 1989.

A Turning Point

- Mahsa Amini passed away on September 16, 2022, following her arrest on charges of reportedly breaching Iran's compulsory headscarf regulation.
- Amini's death in police custody sparked global protests against Iran's conservative Islamic theocracy, highlighting human rights concerns.
- Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament, stressed that her "violent death" served as a pivotal moment, sparking a historic movement led by women.

Role of Women in Protests

- Women have played a significant role in the protests against Iran's mandatory headscarf law, with many publicly removing the hijab in defiance.
- The European Union has enforced sanctions against Iranian authorities and entities due to their involvement in human rights violations linked to the protests.
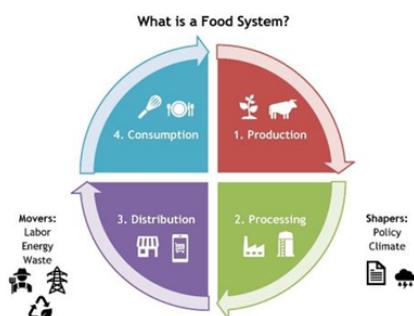
Award Ceremony: The award ceremony is scheduled to take place on December 13, where Mahsa Amini and the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran will be recognized for their dedication to human rights and freedom.

An Opportunity to Recast India's Food System

Context

- On October 16, the world celebrated World Food Day, **but food as a system is looked rarely. Therefore,** there is a need to transform the food system.
- To achieve this and address the challenges, **India must invest, innovate, and create lasting solutions in sustainable agriculture contribution to equitable livelihood, food security, nutrition, and environmental security.**

What is a Food System?

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Significance of Interlinked Nature of Livelihood, Nutritional and Environmental security

- **To Make Economic Returns on Produce Resilient:** While the primary **goal of a food system is to ensure nutrition security for all,** it can only be achieved sustainably **if the producers producing the food make reasonable economic returns that are resilient over time.**
- **Essential to Make Food System Sustainable**
  - The resilient economic returns for producers are intricately linked with the resilience of natural ecosystem because the largest inputs to agriculture; soil, water and climatic conditions are all natural resources.
  - Therefore, **the interconnectedness of nutrition security with livelihood and environmental security is essential to making our food system truly sustainable.**

Challenges to India's Livelihood, Nutritional and Environmental Security

- **Burden of Malnutrition**
  - On the nutrition front **India faces a double burden of malnutrition.**
  - Despite making great progress over the years, **nutrient deficiencies are prevalent in a sizable proportion of Indian population.**
  - As per National Family Health Survey, 2019-21, **35% of children are stunted, and 57% of women and 25% of men are anaemic.**
  - At the other end, due to imbalanced diets and sedentary lifestyles, **24% of adult women and 23% of adult men are now obese.**
  - India has been stepping up efforts to reduce malnutrition, which has included even the Prime Minister calling for a mass movement to eradicate it.
- **Insufficient Farm Incomes**
  - On the production side, **farm incomes are insufficient to meet the ends of marginal and small farmers.**
  - According to a report by the Transforming Rural India Foundation, **more than 68% of marginal farmers supplement their incomes with non-farm activities.**
  - The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and other forms of casual labour are seeing greater participation.
  - It indicates **a lack of skills or opportunities for income diversification.**
- **Depleting Natural Resources**
  - **Depleting natural resources** and changing climate are **making India's food production highly vulnerable.**
  - As in the 2023 soil health survey, **almost half the cultivable land in India has become deficient in organic carbon,** which is an essential indicator of soil health.
  - Groundwater, the largest source of irrigation, is rapidly declining.
  - In States such as Punjab, **more than 75% of the groundwater assessment locations are over-exploited,** threatening the resilience of farm incomes.

Suggestions to Address these Interconnected Challenges

- **Shift Consumer Demands Towards Healthier Diet**

- There is a need to shift to a food plate that is healthier for people and the planet.
- **The private sector drives the aspirational consumption** patterns for India's billion-plus population.
  - What corporations have done to mainstream imported oats or quinoa in India, **can be done for locally-grown millets.**
- **Civil society and the health community could partner with social media influencers** who can shape healthier and sustainable consumption for millions.
- Alongside, **the public sector, through its innumerable touch points** such as the Public Distribution System, mid-day meals, railways catering, urban canteens, and public and institutional procurement, **can help improve what at least 70% of Indians are consuming.**
- Even **religious institutions can shape food choices.**
  - **For instance,** the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, which serves nearly 70,000 people daily, has started procuring naturally-farmed produce.
- **Transition Towards Regenerative Agricultural Practices**
  - To ensure resilient incomes, **the government must support farmers' transition towards remunerative and regenerative agricultural practices.**
  - **The National Mission on Natural Farming** is a step in this direction, but the overall funding for sustainable agriculture is less than 1% of the agricultural budget.
  - The government needs to **broaden and scale up such initiatives to various agro-ecological practices** such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture, precision farming, and much more.
- **Shift Agricultural Support from Input Subsidies to Direct Cash Support**
  - Agriculture support should move from input subsidies to direct cash support to farmers per hectare of cultivation.
  - **It would promote efficient use of inputs, while enabling a level playing field for agroecological practices to thrive.**
- **More Research on Sustainable Agricultural Pracitices:** Agricultural research and extension services should also earmark a proportion of their respective budgets to focus on sustainable agricultural practices**.**
- **More Value Addition of Agricultural Produce in Rural Areas**
  - To improve farm incomes there is a need **to shift farm-to-fork value chains towards more sustainable and inclusive ones.**
  - A critical approach to enhance rural (farm) incomes is **to enable more value addition of agricultural produce in rural areas.**
  - **Middlemen,** such as corporations supplying raw and processed food to consumers, **should prioritise direct procurement from farmers**, incentivise procurement of sustainably harvested produce, and implement well-established approaches such as fair trade.
  - Various young agri-tech enterprises such as DeHaat and Ninjacart are enabling such farm-to-buyer linkages.
- **Enable Trading Between Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)**
  - Since all farmer families in a farmer producer organisation (FPO) are consumers of other farming goods.
  - **Enabling trading of produce between FPOs is another way to ensure a greater value share for farmers, as showcased by a few FPOs in Odisha.**

Conclusion

- **Shifting an entire food system is not a small task.** But the scale of the challenge must not deter India's ambitions.
- If India acts fast, **India has a unique opportunity to showcase to the rest of the world how to get its food system right.** Editorial Analysis

Operation Nanhe Faristey

Under Operation 'Nanhe Faristey', the Railway Protection Force (RPF) plays an important role in reuniting the children lost/separated due to several reasons from their family.

About Operation Nanhe Faristey: It was launched on Indian Railways, and under this drive, **Children in need of care & protection** who came into contact with Indian Railways were rescued and handed over to concerned authorities before being restored to their families.

Key facts about the Railway Protection Force

- The history of the RPF dates back to 1882, when various Railway companies appointed their own guards for protection of Railway property.
- It was **declared a statutory force in 1957** by an enactment of Parliament and subsequently declared as an armed force of the Union of India in the year 1985.
- In 2003, the RPF partially took up the **duties of escorting passenger trains** and access control at the railway stations".
- It is led by a **director-general.**
- It is an armed force under the operational and administrative control of **the Union Ministry of Railways.**
- It is tasked with **protecting and securing railway property**, the passenger areas, and the passengers themselves.

Source PIB: During September 2023, RPF rescued 895 Children (Boys-573 & Girl-322) under Operation 'Nanhe Faristey' Government Schemes and Initiatives

Yuva Sangam (Phase III)

Recently, the registration portal for Phase III of Yuva Sangam, under Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat (EBSB), was launched.

About Yuva Sangam:

- It is an initiative by the Government of India **to strengthen people-to-people connections between youth** belonging to different States/UTs of India.
- Interested youth **in the age group of 18-30 years**, mainly students, NSS (National Service Scheme)/NYKS (Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan) volunteers, employed/self-employed persons, etc. may register through the YUVA SANGAM portal to participate in the forthcoming Phase.
- It was launched under EBSB, draws inspiration from the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- It focuses on **experiential learning and imbibing knowledge** of the rich diversity of India on a first-hand basis.
- It is an on-going cultural exchange with the celebration of diversity at its core wherein participants gain an immersive experience of diverse facets of life, natural landforms, development landmarks, recent achievements, and youth connect in the host state.
- Twenty eminent institutions across India have been identified for Phase III of Yuva Sangam.

- During Phase III of Yuva Sangam, participants from 20 HEIs will be visiting 22 states and UTs.
- **Significance**
  - Under this, the youth will receive multi-dimensional exposure **in five broad areas** will be provided to them, which are **Paryatan** (Tourism), Parampara (Traditions), **Pragati** (Development), **Paraspar Sampark**(People-to-people connect), **and Prodyogiki** (Technology).

Source :pib Online registrations for Yuva Sangam (Phase III) commence for participation Government Schemes and Initiatives

Regional Rapid Transit System

The Prime Minister of India will inaugurate the first leg of the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS), India's first mass rapid system dedicated to regional connectivity.

About the Regional Rapid Transit System:

- It has **semi high-speed rail connectivity** at its core; the RRTS is an integrated mass transit network.
- It aims to ensure "balanced and sustainable urban development" through better connectivity and access across the National Capital Region (NCR).
- It is constructed by **the National Capital Region Transport Corporation**(NCRTC), which is a joint venture company of the **Central government** and the **governments of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.**
- It is **modelled on systems** such as the **RER in Paris**, **Regional-Express trains in Germany** and Austria, as well as the **SEPTA Regional Rail in the United States**, among others.
- These trains will travel significantly faster than metro trains. These will operate at a speed of 160 km/hour but are designed to be able to run at speeds up to 180 km/hour.
- **Eight corridors will be developed** under the project, of which three are being constructed under phase I: the 82-km Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut, the 164-km Delhi-Gurugram-SNB-Alwar, and the 103-km Delhi-Panipat corridors.
- **The significance of this system**
  - When compared with metros, the RRTS network is faster. It will cater to commuters who want to travel relatively longer distances across the NCR in a short time.
  - Compared with the Indian Railways, though the RRTS train will cover relatively smaller distances, it will do **so at higher frequency and provide relatively more comfort** than the average railway coach.

Source :IE PM Modi to flag off RRTS: What is this mass transport system, how it can benefit NCR Economy

Siena Galaxy Atlas (SGA)

Recently, astronomers have created a beautiful atlas of 400,000 galaxies in the cosmic neighbourhood of Milky Way and named it the Siena Galaxy Atlas.

About the Siena Galaxy Atlas:

- It is a **digital atlas** that was created to get **to know our universe better**through several of the known galaxies.
- It was created using data from three astronomical surveys collected between 2014 and 2017 at **Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory** (CTIO) and **Kitt Peak National Observatory (KPNO).** Together, these surveys are known as the DESI Legacy Surveys.
- **How is it different from other atlases?**
  - It is **dependent on state-of-the-art digital images** captured by advanced technology, unlike previous atlases, which relied on antiquated equipment and photographic plates.
  - As it is built on the images captured with highly sensitive instruments, it boasts the most accurate data.
  - It is also the **first cosmic atlas to feature the light profiles of galaxies**- a curve that describes how the brightness of the galaxy changes from its brightest point to its dimmest.
- **Significance**
  - Cosmic atlases help astronomers **spot patterns that help categorise new discoveries,** such as stars that suddenly flare and then disappear (thus called 'transients').
  - These atlases also allow astronomers to identify which objects are contenders for detailed follow-up studies.
  - It helps in **investigating** everything **from the births and evolutions of galaxies** to the distribution of dark matter and propagation of gravitational waves through space.

Source :wionews See 400,000 galaxies near Milky Way in this amazing 'galactic atlas' Science & Tech

Someshwara inscription

Recently, archaeologists discovered a rare inscription connected to the Alupa dynasty during a recent archaeological exploration at Someshwara near Mangaluru, Karnataka.

About the Someshwara inscription:

- This inscription is very significant in the study of **Tuluva history and culture.**
- It has two panels on the top, and in between the two panels, the first line is engraved.
- The rest of the inscription written below **the panels is in Kannada script** and the language of 12th century characters announcing the death of Alupendra I.
- The human figures shown in the inscription **represent Kulashekara Alupendra himself.**
- In the first figure, he is **shown standing in Tribhanga** (tri-bent posture). He holds a sword in his right hand while the left hand rests on a gurani (shield).
- To the left of this panel, divided by a pillar, the King is again **shown in a sitting posture** on a mound, resting both his palms on the centre of his legs in dhyana mudra.

Who was Kulashekara Alupendra?

- Kulashekara Alupendra I was a famous ruler of the **Alupas of South Canara.**
- He was responsible for the **establishment of a new city called Kulashekara in Mangaluru.**
- He also laid down strict rules and regulations for temple administration, which are still followed in all temples in this region.
- He was the first ruler to give **royal patronage to Tulu language and culture**, ruling from both the capitals, Mangaluru and Barkuru.
- Alupendra I **ruled Tulunadu from 1156-1215 A.D**., as known from his other records.
- Though the present inscription is undated, it is datable to 12th century on the basis of paleography.

Source : TH Mangaluru | Archaeologist discovers inscription announcing the death of King Kulashekara Alupendra I at Someshwara History & Culture

Key Facts about Hooghly River

Police recently recovered five bodies after seven people performing tarpan rituals on Mahalaya morning were swept away by a high tide in the Hooghly River.

About the Hooghly River:

- The Hooghly River, also **known as the Bhagirathi-Hoogly** and **Kati-Ganga Rivers,** is one of the significant **rivers in West Bengal**.
- It is a **distributary or arm of the Ganges River,** about **260 km long.**
- **Course:**
    - It is **formed in Murshidabad**, where **Ganga splits into two parts** – while the **part flowing through Bangladesh** is **called the Padma.**
    - The **other part is** the **Hooghly, which flows through** a **heavily** industrialised **area** of West Bengal.
    - The Hooghly river is **silted up above Kolkata**, and **the river flows to the west** and **south to the estuary of Rupnarayan** and **then south** and so**uthwest to enter the Bay of Bengal** through a 32 km-wide estuary.
- The Hooghly's **majority of water comes from the Farakka Feeder Canal**instead of natural water.
- The **Farakka Barrage** is a dam that **diverts water from the Ganges into a canal** near the town of Tildanga **in Malda district**. This **supplies the Hooghly with adequate water** even in the dry season.
- **Haldi, Ajay, Damodar, and Rupnarayan** are the rivers that **feed the lower reaches** of the **Hooghly**.
- The **important cities** near the Hoogli River are **Jiaganj, Azimganj, Murshidabad**, and Baharampur.
- It is **spanned by a cantilever bridge between Haora and Kolkata** and by the **Bally Bridge between Bally and Baranagar.**

Source :telegraph Police recover bodies of five missing after performing Mahalaya rituals in Hooghly river Geography

Idukki Dam

The water level in the Idukki dam, the main hydroelectric power generation station in Kerala, has continued to remain low in recent weeks.

About Idukki Dam:

- It is located in **Kerala, India.**
- It is built **on the Periyar River.**
- It is a **168.91 meter** (554 ft) **tall arch dam.**
- It is one of the **highest ten arch dams in the world** and the **third highest in India after the Tehri Dam** (Uttarakhand) **and Bhakra Nangal Dam**(Himachal Pradesh).
- It is the **first dam in** Asia that is **constructed in a double-curvature arch dam type** and the second in the world.
- The dam **stands between the two mountains**, **Kuravanmala** (839m) and **Kurathimala** (925m).
- It supports a **780 MW hydroelectric power station.**
- **Construction**:
    - **Construction** of the dam **commenced on** 30th April, **1969,** and was **commissioned by** the then Prime Minister of India, **Indira Gandhi, in 1976.**
    - It was **constructed and owned by the Kerala State Electricity Board**.
    - The **Government of Canada aided in the building** of the dam **with long-term loans and grants.**
    - This dam was **constructed along with two other dams at Cheruthoni and Kulamavu**.
    - Together, **the three dams** have **created an artificial lake** that is 60 km² in area.

Source th: The water level in Idukki dam continues to remain low Geography

Bhimashankar Temple

At the Bhimashankar temple, tensions ran high recently when a brawl broke out between two sets of religious leaders known as pujaris over who would lead the puja.

About Bhimashankar Temple:

- It is an ancient **Hindu shrine dedicated to** Lord
- **Location**: It is located in the **Sahyadri hills** in the **Pune District of Maharashtra**.
- It is considered **one of the 12 holy Jyotirlinga shrines** in India.
- In recent times, Bhimashankar has gained tremendous significance since it was **declared a "Wildlife Sanctuary"**. This sanctuary is a **part of the Western Ghats**.
- Bhimashankar is the **source of the river Bhima**.
- **History**:
    - It was **built around the 13th century**. It is a testament to the **skills of the Vishwakarma sculptors.**
    - Structures such as the **shikhara (spires)** were **added by** Maratha Empire statesman **Nana Phadnavis in the 18th century**.
    - The Maratha ruler, **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj**, is also believed to have **facilitated worship here** through his endowments.

- **Architecture:**
  - It is a composite of old and new structures in the **Nagara style of architecture**.
  - The temple features **huge court spaces**, **intricate carvings on walls**, and **colossal pillars.**
  - The sanctum of the temple, called **Garbhgriha**, has been **constructed at a lower level inside** which the sacred Jyotirlinga is present.
  - The **Swayambhoo, or self-emanated Shiv Linga, is** precisely **in the center of the floor of** the Sanctum **Sanctorum**.
  - The **massive pillars** and **doorframes** of the temple are **awash with exquisite mythological carvings** of divine figures and holy symbols.
  - The temple also **houses an ancient shrine of Lord Shani** which is considered very auspicious by the devotees.
  - The **statue of Nandi**, the revered bull who's the vehicle of Shiva, **is present right at the entrance of the temple.**

What are Jyotirlingas?

- A Jyotirlinga is a shrine **where Lord Shiva is worshipped in the form of a Jyotirlingam**.
- There are currently **12 main Jyotirlingas in India.**
- The 12 Jyotirlinga temples in India **take the name of the presiding deity. Each considered a different manifestation** of Lord Shiva.
- **12 Jyotirlingas in India are**:
  - **Somnath** Jyotirlinga in Gir, Gujarat
  - Mallikarjuna Jyotirlinga in Srisailam, Andhra Pradesh
  - **Mahakaleshwar** Jyotirlinga in Ujjain, **Madhya Pradesh**
  - **Omkareshwar** Jyotirlinga in Khandwa, **Madhya Pradesh**
  - Baidyanath Jyotirlinga in Deoghar, Jharkhand
  - **Bhimashankar Jyotirlinga in Maharashtra**
  - Ramanathaswamy Jyotirlinga in Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu
  - Nageshwar Jyotirlinga in Dwarka, Gujarat
  - **Kashi Vishwanath** Jyotirlinga in Varanasi, **Uttar Pradesh**
  - Trimbakeshwar Jyotirlinga in Nasik, Maharashtra
  - **Kedarnath** Jyotirlinga in Rudraprayag, Uttarakhand
  - Ghrishneshwar Jyotirlinga in Aurangabad, Maharashtra

Source :HT 36 held after violent clash at Bhimashankar temple History & Culture

Chanakya Defence Dialogue

The Indian Army is planning to launch the Chanakya Defence Dialogue, a forum for discussing important security matters.

About Chanakya Defence Dialogue:

- It will **serve as a regular forum**, **bringing** together **top minds from the global defense** and strategic **sectors to facilitate the exchange of insights** and ideas.
- It **aims to integrate intelligence, strategy, and expertise**, **fostering discussions on** topics such as **Neighbourhood Forces,** the significant **Indo-Pacific frontier**, and the evolving impact of **emerging technologies** on defense and security.
- The **Indian Army is collaborating with** the renowned think tank, **Centre for Land and Warfare Studies (CLAWS), to** organise **the event.**
- This gathering **will draw participants** from a diverse **range of nations**, including **Australia, France, Japan, and the United States.**
- Scheduled as a two-day conference, the gathering will **feature prominent speakers**, **military strategists, diplomats, and leading intellectuals** in the fields of defense and strategic affairs.

- Discussions will **revolve around** a broad **spectrum of security challenges** and strategies, **focusing particularly in** the pivotal **regions of South Asia and the Indo-Pacific.**
- Additionally, **cooperation in defence** technology, **military exercises**, and **nuclear proliferation** concerns will be discussed

Source :toi Indian Army plans to start 'Chanakya Defence Dialogue' talk series Defence & Security

What are Hang Gliders

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) recently issued a new set of regulations regarding the operation of powered hang gliders.

About Hang Gliders:

- A hang glider is a type of **aircraft that uses air currents to stay aloft.**
- Unlike other aircraft, hang gliders **have no engine or propeller.**
- Instead, they **rely on the wind to keep them in the air.**
- **How does it work?**
  - Since a hang glider is unpowered, it **can't take off from low ground**. It has to be **launched from somewhere high, like a hill** or mountain.
  - **Gravity is the main force** on a hang glider. This is the **weight of the pilot and the wing.**
  - The **weight produces the thrust** that **keeps the aerofoil moving** through the air.
  - The **aerofoil shape of the wing stops the hang glider from dropping** like a stone. It produces lift.
  - The **aerofoil forces the air flowing over the top of the wing to travel faster**, thereby 'stretching' it **to produce a low-pressure area.**
  - Meanwhile, the **downward and forward motion of the wing compresses the air flowing under** the wing.
  - The **aerofoil is then drawn up into the area of low pressure**, **producing lift**.
  - During the flight, the **pilot controls the aircraft by the trapeze**, both to change the direction and to vary the speed.
- **Powered Hang Gliders:**
  - A powered hang glider is an aircraft that **combines the features of a traditional hang glider with** those **of a powered aircraft.**
  - They typically **have a small engine attached to the frame**, which **allows the pilot to take off and stay in the air without having to rely** on thermals or other **weather conditions.**
  - This can make them a **good option for anyone** who **isn't experienced** enough **to take advantage of the winds** to stay in the air.

DGCA Regulations on Powered Hang Gliders:

- **No individual** is permitted **to operate** a powered hang glider **without prior authorization from a DGCA-approved examiner** or instructor.
- The **qualified examiner** or instructor **must have a minimum of 50 hours of experience** on powered hang gliders, **including at least 10 hours on a dual machine**.
- Furthermore, the **approved examiner** or instructor **is responsible for conducting thorough checks** and authorising **other individuals** to fly.
- **Individuals must meet specific criteria before conducting test flights** on a powered hang glider. This **includes holding a valid Commercial Pilot Licence** (CPL) **with at least 25 hours of flying experience** on a powered hang glider.
- Alternatively, an individual **must possess authorization along with 50 hours of flying experience** on a powered hang glider, as **stipulated in the revised regulations**.
- DGCA has mandated that **any transaction involving the sale or transfer** of a powered hang glider **must be accompanied by a certificate issued by the DGCA**. This certificate will **only be granted following a thorough background check** of prospective buyers **conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs** (MHA).
- **No owner o**r operator is **allowed to lease, rent, or lend** a powered hang glider **to any individual or entity.**

- The **use of any remote sensing equipment, weapons**, or photography and video recording devices on a powered hang glider **is strictly prohibitedwithout explicit permission from the MHA**, unless it is deemed necessary for the safe operation of the aircraft or as specified by the relevant guidelines.
- **Security measures approved by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security**(BCAS) **shall be adopted at the place of parking** as well as **at the place of operation** before each flight by the owner or operator.

Source :cnbctv DGCA issues new guidelines for powered hang gliders for enhanced safety; check details `Polity & Governance`

Centre Rolls Back its Plan to Licence Laptop, PC Imports

Why in News?

- The Union Government has rolled out an 'Import Management System' for IT hardware, including laptops and computers, modifying its initial stance of imposing physical restrictions.
- The notification comes just days after concerns were raised by US, China, South Korea and Taiwan at a recent World Trade Organisation meeting.

What's in Today's Article?

- Background (Government's Decision to Ban Laptop Imports)
- Reasons for the Decisions (Import Management System, China Factor, etc.)
- News Summary

Background:

- On 3ᵣ August 2023, the Union Government imposed restrictions on import of laptops, tablets, all-in-one personal computers and ultra-small computers and servers with immediate effect.
- However, this decision was later suspended **till 1ₛ November, 2023**.
- The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) had to suspend the implementation as custom officials stationed at ports started holding up shipments of the specified electronic items.
- The issue had also come up in meetings between US and Indian officials after American companies including **Apple**, **Dell**, and **HP** urged the US government to ask Indian government to reconsider its policy.

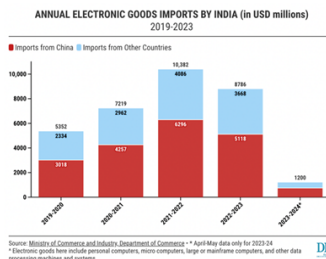### Government's Plans of Introducing "Import Management System":

- The Union government is conducting consultations on a new system through which it aims to monitor the sources from which IT hardware is being imported.
- Through a system known as "**Import Management System**", the government will monitor the sources from which IT hardware is being imported.
- After the introduction of this system, finished IT hardware such as laptops, personal computers and servers can only be imported from "**trusted geographies**".
- Beyond laptops, personal computers and servers, the directive could be applied on a large range of finished IT hardware equipment including 5G sensors, which are predominantly being imported from China.
- The Import Management System is currently in draft stage. Once finalised, it is expected to replace the licensing requirement.
- There is precedence to this idea of allowing imports only from trusted sources.

National Security Directive on Telecommunication Sector:

- In June 2021, the Central government launched the 'trusted telecom portal' and signaled the implementation of the **National Security Directive on Telecommunication Sector** (NSDTS).
- Under the directive, telecom companies are mandatorily required to connect in their networks only those new devices which are designated as "trusted products" from "trusted sources".

- Post the 5G spectrum auction last year, operators like **Reliance Jio** and **Bharti Airtel** have signed agreements with companies like **Ericsson** and **Samsung**, excluding Chinese majors **Huawei** and **ZTE**.

Reasons Behind the Introduction of Import Management System:

ANNUAL ELECTRONIC GOODS IMPORTS BY INDIA (in USD millions) 2019-2023

- **China Factor –**
  - Data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry gives us a broad picture of India's dependence on China with regard to the import of electronic goods such as laptops, computers etc.
  - Indeed, India's imports of the aforementioned class of electronic goods have been steadily rising.
  - Whereas in 2019-20, India's imports of electronic goods stood at $5.3 billion, that figure climbed to $10.3 billion in 2021-22, before declining slightly to hit $8.7 billion in 2022-23.
  - Given this fact, a rise in indigenous manufacturing would not only help India reduce its dependence on its diplomatic and business rival but would also help indigenous manufacturers expand their footprint globally.
  - The **introduction of Import Management System could force IT hardware companies to establish new supply chains, as China is unlikely to be classified as a trusted geography**.
- **Security Factor –**
  - Another factor behind the restrictions imposed on this class of electronic goods is concerns about 'security'.
  - The restrictions may have been brought in to **guard against electronic hardware coming in with "in-built security loopholes that may potentially endanger sensitive personal and enterprise data"**.
  - Across the world, many red flags have been raised about cybersecurity with regard to Chinese-manufactured electronics.

News Summary:

- The Union Government has rolled out an 'Import Management System' for IT hardware, including laptops and computers, modifying its initial stance of imposing physical restrictions.
- Under the proposed IMS, **IT hardware companies will be required to register and disclose data related to their imports, and countries from which they import, among other things**.
  - Laptops, personal computers (including tablet computers), microcomputers, large or mainframe computers, and certain data processing machines have been covered under the new imports monitoring system.
  - The system will ensure that it will be faceless and contactless, and there will be no hassles for importers to fill in their details
- This comes as a big relief to the industry which feared that the previous licensing notification would lead to a kind of quota system.
- **There will be no restrictions on imports under baggage rules, and import of one laptop, tablet, personal computer or ultra-small form factor computer, including those purchased from e-commerce portals through post or courier, will also be exempted**.
- Exemption has also been provided for up to 20 such items per consignment for the purpose of R&D, testing, benchmarking, evaluation and product development.
- Government officials maintained that the changes have been made to make it an "end-to-end" online system to monitor imports and ensure such items come from trusted sources `Economics`

Adopting the Digital Crop Survey System

Why in News? Highlighting that the present system of estimation of crop area and production is completely manual, the Centre has asked states and Union Territories (UTs) to digitise the process by adopting the Digital Crop Survey System from July next year.

What's in Today's Article?

- Need for the Digital Crop Survey
- Guidelines for the Digital Crop Survey
- About the Digital Crop Survey

Need for the Digital Crop Survey:

- **Currently**, the collection and compilation of crop statistics is **completely manual except in a few states**, resulting in delay and manual errors.
  - **Only a few of the states** like Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh have established a digital data collection system in the form of GPS-enabled mobile applications for crop area and CCEs data collection directly from the field.
  - **States like Maharashtra and MP** have also developed such digital systems but only for crop area recording.
- **India suffers for want of reliable agricultural production estimates** and stressing on the need for "a real time assessment estimate" of crops.
- **Therefore, a need was felt to reform** the existing production estimation system through the use of technological intervention.

Guidelines for the Digital Crop Survey:

- According to sources, **the Economics, Statistics and Evaluation Division (ESED)** under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW), **has finalised the guidelines.**
- According to the guidelines, **all states/ UTs shall automate/digitise** the process of area enumeration/girdawari of crops at field level, i.e., Digital Crop Survey, from 2024-25 Agricultural Year.
  - In India, the agriculture year begins in July and ends in June, the following year.
- Under the guidelines, **states and UTs shall use GPS enabled mobile application** for collecting crop sown data of each plot for each season and share the village level aggregated data with DA&FW through API only.

About the Digital Crop Survey:

- As part of the Digital Crop Survey, the MoA&FW has asked states **to collect information on "basic parameters"**, including -
  - Village name, year, season, farmer ID, farm ID,
  - Crop name (at farm plot level),
  - Crop variety,
  - Crop sown area (at farm plot level),
  - Geotags of crop photos,
  - Geotags of farm boundary where the crop is sown,
  - Sowing/planting date (at farm plot level), irrigation type (at farm plot level), and
  - Irrigation source (at farm plot level).
- This move comes after the Centre launched a pilot Digital Crop Survey across a dozen states earlier this year.
- **In a separate move**, the MoA&FW has also revamped the timelines of the estimate release.
  - As per the earlier system, the ministry used to release estimates in five phases.
  - However, now the ministry has decided to do away with the fourth phase that had been released every August.
  - The ministry will release the final estimates covering all states and all seasons (kharif, rabi, summer) in September-October.
  - Earlier, the final estimates used to be released in the month of February, the following year. Economics

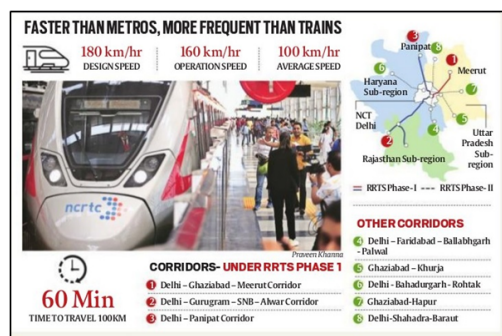# PM to launch India's first Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)

Why in news?

- PM Modi will inaugurate the first leg of the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS), India's first mass rapid system dedicated to regional connectivity.
- Trains on the first section will eventually cut the journey time between Delhi and Meerut to less than an hour.

What's in today's article?

- Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)
- Namo Bharat trains

Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)

- **About**
  - With semi high-speed rail connectivity at its core, the RRTS is an integrated, mass transit network.
  - It aims to ensure balanced and sustainable urban development through better connectivity and access across the NCR.
- **Origin**
  - The idea of such a network lies in a study which the Indian Railways was commissioned to carry out in the year 1998-99.
  - The study identified the possibility of an RRTS network to connect various locations in the NCR through fast commuter trains.
  - The proposal was re-examined in the year 2006 with the extension of the Delhi Metro lines to some NCR towns such as Gurgaon, Noida and Ghaziabad.
  - It was soon taken up by the **National Capital Region Planning Board**(NCRPB) while developing its Functional Plan on Transport for NCR-2032.
  - NCRPB identified and recommended eight RRTS corridors to connect NCR towns with high speed rail-based commuter transit services.
- **Objective**
  - It seeks to unlock the entire potential of the NCR in various ways in addition to enhancing multi-modal connectivity at the existing transportation hubs.
  - One of the most significant aims of the project is to nudge commuters towards public transportation.
    - Hence, it will have a positive impact on relieving the congestion both on its road/highways as well as existing metro and railway networks.
  - The project aims to give a push to employment generation and the opening up of newer commercial hubs along the current contours of the NCR.
  - Shorter travel times are expected to increase the overall economic productivity of the region.
- **Features**
  - RRTS trains will travel significantly faster than metro trains.
  - These will operate at a speed of 160 km/hour but are designed to be able to run at speeds up to 180 km/hour.
  - The RRTS is modelled on systems such as the RER in Paris, Regional-Express trains in Germany and Austria as well as the SEPTA Regional Rail in the United States, among others.

How is the RRTS different from existing metro or railways systems?

- **When compared with metros**, the RRTS network is faster.

- **Compared with the Indian Railways**, though the RRTS train will cover relatively smaller distances. It will do so at higher frequency and provide relatively more comfort than the average Railways coach.

Namo Bharat trains

- **About**
  - India's first regional rapid train, between Delhi and Meerut, has been named "Namo Bharat".
  - Today, PM is scheduled to:
    - inaugurate the priority section of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridor and
    - flag off the "RapidX train" connecting Sahibabad and Duhai Depot.
- **Construction**
  - The National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) has constructed the RRTS also known as Namo Bharat.
    - NCRTC is a joint venture company of the Central government and the governments of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
    - NCRTC, under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, is mandated with implementing the RRTS project across the National Capital Region Economics

Practice questions With reference to Transit oriented development, consider the following statement.
(1) It works on the principles of traffic calming and last mile connectivity.
(2) Namo Bharat (RapidX) will boost inclusive development.
(3)India has eight rapid regional transport system currently.
How many of the above statement are correct?
(A) None (B) only one (C) only two (D) All three

Answer C- Only two statements are correct.
Statement 1 is correct.
Statement 2 is correct.
Statement 3 is incorrect. Delhi- Meerut RRTS is the first RRTS of India. National capital Region planning Board has recommended 8 RRTS corridor to connect NCR towns.

Proposed reforms for World Bank and other Multilateral Development Banks

Why in news? A G20 expert panel on strengthening Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, has proposed some reforms.

What's in today's article?

- Multilateral Development Banks
- News Summary

Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs)

- Multilateral Development Banks are institutions whose members include multiple developed and developing countries.
- These banks have to fulfil certain lending obligations to facilitate developmental objectives.
- They provide financing and technical assistance to countries and organisations undertaking projects across sectors including transport, energy, urban infrastructure, and waste management.
- Usually, developed countries in MDBs contribute to the lending pool while developing countries primarily borrow from these institutions to fund development projects.

Experts advocating for reforms within MDBs

- **To better deal with global challenges in effective ways**
  - The G20 expert group cites the climate crisis to argue that stakeholders worldwide know what needs to be done to mitigate it.
  - However, they lack mechanisms to make this happen on a global scale, especially in emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs).
- **Engagement with the private sector**
  - The existing perception and practices of MDBs have adversely impacted their engagement with the private sector.
  - MDBs are often seen as bureaucratic and risk averse, which deters the private sector from being more involved in assisting with financing.
  - Given that MDBs need to ramp up financing to $390 billion by 2030, the private sector can play a pivotal role in making that happen.
    - This can be done by reversing the current trend of low private financial flows to EMDEs.
  - The private sector's involvement depends on MDBs:
    - embracing partnerships with the private sector;
    - taking on more risk, especially credit risk and policy risk; and
    - then managing it properly.

- This requires reforms in MDBs.

How have Multilateral Development Banks traditionally lent in countries such as India?

- MDBs have played a crucial role in India's development journey by financing key infrastructure projects with longer gestation periods.
- **World Bank**
  - The World Bank, established in 1944, has committed to lending worth $97.6 billion in India, including all active and closed projects.
  - Of the total commitments:
    - $18.7 billion (19%) to projects in public administration sector,
    - $14.8 billion (15%) to the agriculture, fishing and forestry sector, and
    - $10.6 billion (11%) to the transport sector.
- **Asian Development Bank**
  - The Manila-based Asian Development Bank, formed in 1969, has cumulatively committed to assistance worth $59.7 billion in India for project and technical assistance.
  - Of the $2 billion it committed in 2022, $1.8 billion was committed to sovereign projects, for which the loan amount is guaranteed by either the central, state, or local government(s), and just $0.2 billion to non-sovereign projects.
- **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)**
  - The Beijing-headquartered Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which was formed in 2016, has approved financing worth $9.9 billion in India.
  - Of the total 42 projects for which AIIB has approved financing, 29 are sovereign projects and 13 are non-sovereign projects.
- **European Investment Bank**
  - The European Investment Bank, established in 1958, has signed off on 22 projects in India with a cumulative value of Euro 4.5 billion.
  - Of the total amount, Euro 2.45 billion were signed off for the transport sector and Euro 1.5 billion for the energy sector.

Background: G20 Expert Group on Strengthening Multilateral Development Banks

- The G20 Independent Expert Group (IEG) was established by India to provide recommendations for strengthening Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs).
- The group is co-convened by Prof. Larry Summers (US) and Mr. NK Singh (India).

News Summary: Proposed reforms for World Bank and other MDBs: The G20 expert group on strengthening MDBs has presented a 30-point roadmap for "bigger, bolder, better" versions of them.

Recommendations given by the G20 Independent Expert Group

- **Shifting from financing individual projects to prioritizing programs with sectoral focus and long-term transformation plans**
  - The panel wants these institutions to shift from an approach of individual projects and prioritise programmes identified by national governments with sectoral focus and long-term transformation plans.
  - MDBs should focus their operations on helping national governments create and operationalise their respective **country platforms** for the highest priority sustainable development goals (SDG).
    - These platforms are voluntary mechanisms established by respective governments to encourage collaboration among development partners, based on a common strategic vision and shared priorities.
- **Bring private sector engagement to the centre of MDB operations**
  - This can be done by breaking away from the culture of limited operational interaction between their private and sovereign financing arms.
  - Greater coordination between multiple stakeholders is crucial to the success of MDBs.
- **Outlined a threefold agenda for reforming MDBs**
  - This included:
    - tripling annual sustainable lending levels to $390 billion by 2030,
    - adopting a triple mandate to eradicate extreme poverty, promote shared prosperity, and contribute to global public goods,
    - expanding and modernizing funding models to attract a wider range of investors through flexible and innovative means.
- **Other suggestions**
  - MDBs must jointly create multi-year programs & significantly increasing MDB funding. Economics

Rau's

Theyyam UPSC Syllabus: PrelimsSub Theme: Art and Culture | UPSC

Theyyam

General Studies I #Art&Culture #Folkdances #Prelimsnuggets Primary Source: The Hindu

Context: *Theyyam dance is performed annually during the Malayalam months of Thulam (Mid-October-mid-November).*

About Theyyam:

- Theyyam, also referred to as **Kaliyattom, is a traditional folk-dance** ritual that is practiced in **northern Kerala and certain parts of Karnataka.**
- A similar practice known as **Bhuta Kola is followed in the Tulunadu** region of neighbouring **Karnataka.**
- Over time, it has evolved into a socio-religious ceremony with its roots in the worship of divinities and heroes.
- Villages were obligated to organize Theyyam as an act of appeasement towards gods, goddesses, and the spirits of departed heroes. As a result, it was also known as **Thirayattom, signifying the dance of the village.**
- Notably, a significant number of Theyyam deities originated from individuals belonging to the lower castes of Kerala's caste system.
- Theyyam is performed by individuals from castes and tribes such as **Pulayar, Vannan, Malayan, Velan, and Kalanaadi.**
- There are approximately 456 documented types of Theyyams, and it is primarily a male performance tradition, **except for the Devakkoothu Theyyam, which is the only Theyyam ritual performed by women.**
- **Ritual Performance:**
  - The first segment of the performance is commonly referred to as **Vellattam or Thottam.**
  - This ceremonial dance is accompanied by a chorus and the use of musical instruments like **Chenda, Elathalam, Kurumkuzal, and Veekkuchenda.**

Practice Question for Prelims Q. With reference to the cultural history of India, which one of the following is the correct description of "Theyyam"?
(a) Ritualistic dance form associated with the Kingdom of Travancore.
(b) Ritualistic dance primarily associated with the Brahmin community of Kerala.
(c) Folk dance in Kerala, primarily associated with the Pulayas community.
(d) An ancient martial art tradition in some parts of South India.

Answer: (c)

Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement

UPSC Syllabus: Prelims Sub Theme: Economy|UPSC

Article: Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA)

Context The Supreme Court has given a ruling with respect to the interpretation of the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) and it apex court has implied that a country can claim benefits under DTAA from the time of its treaty pact and not a later date when some other country would have gained from entering into another treaty.

What is a DTAA?
- Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) is a mutually consented agreement between two countries on the taxability of specified incomes which both countries claim to have the right to levy tax on.
- DTAAs in India are **governed by the Income Tax Act, 1961.**
- India has **executed DTAAs with all major countries extending to over eighty countries.**

Why Are They Needed?
- When a resident of one country earns income from another country, he may be taxed in both countries on the grounds that he is the resident of the first country while the source of the income is in the second country.
- Without a DTAA, the taxpayer would bear the brunt of paying taxes in both countries.

Objectives of DTAA
- **Avoiding double taxation on international incomes:** DTAAs establish the territory that will have the right to levy tax on a particular income and ensures that the same income is not taxed more than once by different territories.
- **Granting relief to taxpayers in one country for the tax paid by them in another country:** They provide a mechanism for availing the credit of tax paid in one country against taxes to be paid in another country. Alternatively, it may provide an exemption to tax on the overlapping income already taxed in another country.
- **Exchanging information for preventing tax evasion or tax avoidance:** It facilitates both countries the requisite information exchange to ensure prevention of tax evasion and tax avoidance.

- **Recovery of income tax due as per the provisions of tax of respective countries:** With the exchange of information through the implementation of DTAAs, the countries are in a position to also recover the taxes as per the respective tax provisions of the countries in a well structured manner and well within the regulatory framework.
- **Promoting economic and trade relations between countries:** DTAAs bring in transparency in the tax systems which promotes a better business environment and helps in expanding trade relations between countries.

Types of Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAA)
DTAAs may be classified based on two criteria: one based on the incomes that it covers and the other based on the countries involved.
- **Based on the Incomes Covered:**
  - **DTAAs may either be comprehensive or limited.** Comprehensive DTAAs cover all major income streams.
  - Usually, comprehensive agreements include incomes from immovable properties, business profits, dividends, royalties, fees for technical services, interest, capital gains, services, etc.
  - However, limited DTAAs cover specific incomes like shipping, aircraft, inheritance, etc.
- **Based on the Countries Involved:**
  - **DTAAs may either be bilateral or multilateral.**
  - Bilateral agreements are entered into only between two countries, while multilateral agreements are entered into by more than two countries.

Model Question: With reference to Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs), which of the following statements is/are correct?
1. It was introduced as a part of the Finance Act, 2023.
2. DTAA facilitates exchange of requisite information to ensure prevention of tax evasion and tax avoidance.
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
Answer: (b)

Explanation:**Statement 1 is incorrect:** DTAAs in India are **governed by the Income Tax Act, 1961.**
Statement 2 is correct: Objectives of DTAA include
- Avoiding double taxation on international incomes.
- Granting relief to taxpayers in one country for the tax paid by them in another country.
- **Exchanging information for preventing tax evasion or tax avoidance**.
- Recovery of income tax due as per the provisions of tax of respective countries.
- Promoting economic and trade relations between countries.

Zighrana **UPSC Syllabus: Prelims Sub Theme:** Economy|UPSC In Kannauj, hope in a bottle (ATTAR)

#prelims trade # Indian Economy #Primary source-The Hindu

Context:-India is the world's largest exporter of attar, but the olfactory art and science inspired by Nur Jahan's love for the damask rose has changed in its profile from a high-end personal indulgence to an industry additive.

About Attar and fragrance and flavor industry

- It is distilled extract of flowers and herbs in a base of sandalwood oil.
- Got GI(Geographical indication) tag a decade ago.
- Kannauj attar in two fragrances (1) **Pink damask rose** -native to the region(2) **Earthy petrichor** -made for the occasion , and presented in embellished glass bottles.
- About 2000 varieties of rose grown in India out of which only two **Rosadamascena** and **centifola** are used in attar.
- **Zighrana**- it is the first perfumery and the only one so far from Kannauj to position the traditional product as a brand in the global market.
- The Ministry of Micro, small and Medium enterprises pegs the worth of India's fragrance and flavor industry at 10,000 crore annually.
- Industry is growing @ of 11-12 % in last seven years.
- India holds 10 % of global market in flavor and fragrance Industry, remains largest exporter of attar , sending it to 71 countries.

Historical background of Kannauj and fragrance industry.

- Local lore's talks about 7ᵗʰ century Kannauj as **Kusumpura,** the city of flowers.
- Gangetic rivers aided the trade the trade since Harshavardhana's empire.
- During Mughal period , Jahangir proclaimed as the first royal patron during his reign in the early 17ᵗʰ century.
- It is believed that Nur Jahan had fired the imagination of perfumers to create rose attar.
- The Britishers were fascinated with it, hence it flourished during colonial era.

Challenges to Attar industry

- Central government restricted the availability of sandalwood in the 1990's which formed the base of perfume (about 95.98% of the product), causing shutting down of distilleries.
- It has to face various rival products like liquid paraffin, jojoba oil ,low quality sandalwood grown in Australia and Egypt.

Practice year question
With reference to 'Zighrana' sometimes mentioned in the news, consider the following statements:
1. **It is made of flowering plants.**
2. **It is one of the traditional product brands to get position in the Global market.**
3. **The product can be traced back to the Ashoka period.**
4. **India is largest exporter of Zighrana and similar products.**

How many of the above statements are correct? (A) Only two (B) Only Three (C) All four (D) None

Answer- B Statement 1 is correct- It is made of rose and sandalwood oil. Statement 2 is correct- Zighrana- it is the first perfumery and the only one so far from Kannauj to position the traditional product as a brand in the global market. Statement 3 is incorrect- It can be traced back to Harshavardhan empire, however the Attar get prominence during Mughal era by Jahangir and Nur Jahan. Statement 4 is Correct- India holds 10 % of global market in flavor and fragrance Industry, remains largest exporter of attar, sending it to 71 countries.

IMF Bailout: Mains Sub Theme: International Relations | UPSC

IMF Bailout #General Studies II #International Institutions
#Mains Exhaustive Source: Indian Express**Context:** *Bangladesh has sealed a bailout agreement with IMF to boost its cash strapped economy.*
Reasons for seeking Bailout from IMF:

- **Balance of Payment crisis:** A nation may seek a bailout when it faces a deficit in its balance of payments, which includes trade imbalances, a shortage of foreign exchange reserves, and difficulties in meeting external debt obligations. It can be a result of **political instability, populist measures** such as freebies etc.
- **Unsustainable Debt:** When a country accumulates unsustainable levels of debt, it may become unable to service its debt obligations, potentially leading to default. **E.g., Sri Lanka and Pakistan.**
- **External shocks:** Natural disasters, global economic crises, or other external shocks like *pandemic (COVID-19)* can severely affect a country's economic stability. E.g., ***Bangladesh*** following the Russia Ukraine war its **dollar reserves have shrunk** by more than $1/3^{rd}$ due to costly oil imports.
- **Currency depreciation** due to inappropriate monetary & fiscal policies. **E.g.,** overly expansionary monetary policies, such as printing excessive money or keeping interest rates too low for too long, can lead to high inflation and exchange rate instability.

IMF helps countries in following ways:

- It basically *lends money,* often in the form of *special drawing rights* (SDRs), to troubled economies that seek the lender's assistance.
- SDRs simply represent a basket of five currencies, namely the **U.S. dollar, the euro, the Chinese yuan, the Japanese yen, and the British pound.**
- Currently, **Bangladesh** is in urgent need for U.S. dollars to import essential items such as fuel and also to pay their foreign debt.

Conditionalities of IMF Bailout:

1. Reducing government borrowing – Higher taxes and lower spending
2. Higher interest rates to stabilise the currency.
3. Structural adjustment such Privatisation, deregulation of certain sectors.

Issue with IMF conditions:

- The policies of structural adjustment and macroeconomic intervention can make difficult economic situations worse.
- For instance, in the Asian crisis of 1997, countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand were required by the IMF to pursue tight monetary policy (higher interest rates) and tight fiscal policy to reduce the budget deficit and strengthen exchange rates. However, these policies caused a minor slowdown to turn into a serious recession with very high levels of unemployment.

Does the IMF charge for its loans?
All IMF members have access to financial support through the General Resources Account (GRA), which is subject to various charges. These charges are designed to cover the operational costs of the IMF and support its activities, including those related to providing policy advice and capacity development to member countries.
About IMF:

- The IMF is an **independent international organization.**
- It is a cooperative of 190 member countries, whose objective is to promote **world economic stability and growth.**
- It was originally created in **1945** as part of the *Bretton Woods agreement,* which attempted to encourage international financial cooperation by introducing a system of convertible currencies at fixed exchange rates.
- The member countries are the shareholders of the cooperative, providing the capital of the IMF through quota.
- It is one of several autonomous organizations designated by the United Nations (UN) as **"Specialized Agencies,"** with which the UN has established working relationships.
- It is a **permanent observer** at the UN.
- Its headquarters is in Washington DC.
- The IMF began its operations in 1947, and **France became the first country to draw funds** from the IMF in 1947.
- Membership of the IMF is **compulsory** to be part of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD or World Bank).

IMF's lending provisions:

- **Extended Fund Facility:** It provides financial assistance to countries facing serious medium-term balance of payments problems because of structural weaknesses that require time to address.
- **Extended credit Facility:** It provides medium-term financial assistance to low-income countries (LICs) with protracted balance of payments problems.
- **Rapid Financing Instrument:** It provides prompt financial assistance to any IMF member country facing an urgent balance of payments need. It is one of the facilities under the General Resources Account (GRA) that provide financial support to countries, including in times of crisis.
- **Rapid Credit Facility:** It provides fast concessional financial assistance to low-income countries (LICs) facing an urgent balance of payments need.
- **Flexible Credit Line:** It is designed to meet the demand for crisis-prevention and crisis-mitigation lending for countries with very strong policy frameworks and track records in economic performance.
- **Resilience and Sustainability Facility:** It provides affordable long-term financing to countries undertaking reforms to reduce risks to prospective balance of payments stability, including those related to climate change and pandemic preparedness.

Practice MCQ: With reference to International Monetary Fund (IMF), consider the following statements:
1. It is a specialized financial agency of United Nations.
2. Membership of the IMF is compulsory to be part of the World Bank.
3. It does not charge member countries for its loans.
How many of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None
Ans. (b)

POSH Act UPSC Syllabus: Mains Sub Theme: Social Issues | UPSC

Table 1: Comparison of the provisions of the Bill as introduced and as passed by Parliament with the recommendations of the Standing Committee

Bill as introduced	Standing Committee Recommendations	Bill as passed by Parliament
The Bill protects women from sexual harassment but excludes men from its purview.	An enabling provision to look at cases of sexual harassment against men may be explored.	No provision
Clause 2: Definitions		
Definition of 'aggrieved woman' The Bill defines an 'aggrieved woman' as a woman who alleges to have been subjected to any act of sexual harassment. It covers every woman at the work place (whether employed or not).	The definition be modified to (i) include situations involving 'victimization'; (ii) cover domestic workers. On 'victimization', the Committee noted that in the event of an employee raising a complaint, there may be a tendency of employers to dismiss the employee on some ground. The definition of 'aggrieved woman' should also include a woman who has been victimized. In the case of domestic workers, the definition of 'aggrieved woman' should cover only the employee. In the event of any untoward incident happening with a friend/ acquaintance of a domestic worker, a separate judicial intervention may be sought.	Includes domestic worker. Does not include victimisation. Definition of 'domestic worker' only includes employee.
Definition of 'employee' The Bill defines 'employee' as a person employed at a workplace (on a regular or ad hoc basis), either directly or through an agent and irrespective of the amount of remuneration paid, except a domestic worker working at home.	A separate definition of 'domestic worker' should be added. In the definition of 'employee' add the words 'for any third party encountered in the course of work', to enable employers to act on behalf of casual workers or employees employed through contractors.	Includes a definition of 'domestic worker' and deletes 'except a domestic worker working at home' from the definition of 'employee'. No other change.
Definition of employer In the context of workplaces falling under government, the Bill defines 'employer' as the head of the workplace or an authorized officer. In other cases, the employer has been defined as the person responsible for the management,	Include an explanatory clause about contractors. Also, similar provisions should be prescribed for both the government and the private sector. Like in the case of government workplaces, the heads of private workplaces should also be held liable. The Committee pointed out that if domestic workers are included under the Bill, the definition of 'employer' will need to be expanded	Adds an explanation of the term 'management'. It includes the person or board or committee responsible for formulation and administration of policies of the organisation. 'Employer' also includes a person discharging contractual obligations with respect to his employees and a person or a

Tags: GS-2, GS-1, Social Justice, Government Schemes and Policies   Context: SC directs Centre, states to immediately appoint district officers under POSH Act.

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (POSH Act)
The Act replaced the Vishaka Guidelines.

Salient features of the act
- **Defines** sexual harassment at the work place.
- **Creates a mechanism** for redressal of complaints while providing safeguards against false or malicious charges.
- **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)** is required to be constituted at each office with 10 or more employees by the employer.
- **A Local Complaints Committee** is required to be constituted by District Officer at each district, if required at the block level.
- Powers of Complaints Committees
  - They have the powers of civil courts for gathering evidence.
  - Summoning and requiring the attendance of any person and interrogating him under oath.
  - Requirement to discover and produce documents.
  - They are required to provide for conciliation before initiating an inquiry, if requested by the complainant.
- Fines and Penalties:
  - Non-compliance with the provisions of the Act shall be punishable with a fine of up to Rs 50,000.
  - Repeated violations may lead to higher penalties and cancellation of licence or registration to conduct business.

Issues with the implementation of the act:

- Neither **legal qualifications nor training for members of ICC** is provided but the act gave it the power of civil court.
- **Just Monetary fine** for grave misconduct may lessen the deterrent effect of the act e.g., modest fine of Rs 50,000 for non-compliance with the act.
- Employers nominate members to the Internal Complaints Committee which may create a **Conflict of Interest**.
- **Prior internal inquiry may** promote a culture of suppression of legitimate complaints which could deter victims from filing complaints.
- **Provision of conciliation** in the act treats a criminal act as a civil dispute.
- **Lack of centralised data** relating to cases of harassment of women at workplaces, compliance and non-compliance of company.
- **Dysfunctional Local Complaints Committee dysfunctional,** Supreme court found that many States had not bothered to notify District Officers.
- **Informal Economy constitute 95% of India's women workers** but Local Committees to be formed under POSH Act have either been not formed in most districts or are not well publicised about leaving women in the informal sector with no avenue to report.
- **Because of the fear of expulsion or forced withdrawal of work** by the family members women are discouraged to report sexual harassment incidents.
- **Digital divide,** most of India's women workers find it difficult to access redressal methods like of SHeBox online complaint platform, given the low number of women who use the internet.

Way forward
- **Role of National Commission of Women:** Empowering **National Commission of Women** with power to summon people and carry out independent investigations, impose fines, search and seizure in matters of sexual harassment at workplace.
- **Increasing Awareness:** Awareness about the act should be increased among females, added to school and college curriculums. Discussions should be organised around these issues in civil society.
- **Special attention** should be given towards sectors where women are more prone to such vulnerability E.g., Garment sector, Domestic workers.
- **Gender Neutrality:** Law needs to be made gender neutral as sexual harassment challenges can be faced even by transgenders and males.
- **Auditing and Fund Allocation:** Nationwide audit of functioning of Internal Complaints Committee and Local Complaints Committee. Earmarking of budget for the functioning of Local Complaints Committee.
- **Appointment and Effective Functioning of ICC:** Government should ensure regular appointment of officers of ICC and they also possess some legal background to make their functioning effective.

Drug Problem
UPSC Syllabus: Mains Sub Theme: Social Issues|UPSC

Context: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann led a large prayer gathering of schoolchildren, in which they pledged to reject the scourge of drugs.
- Punjab continues to grapple with the menace that has plagued it for over a decade. Seasoned police officers describe it as narco-terrorism, propagated by an unfriendly neighbour.
- The Director-General of Police regularly updates the public on drug seizures, citing an alarming annual tally of 12,000 to 14,000 cases filed under the NDPS Act, alongside a record seizure of 1,100 kg of heroin in 2023.
- Drug overdose deaths continue — as per the government's own report, 266 persons have died of drugs between April 2020 and March 2023.
- Earlier it was also reported that the problem of drug abuse is likely to explode in the next decade as the usage in now reaching the adolescents. It was also observed that impact of drug abuse has increased both in rural and Urban India.
- There has been also an increase in drug-abuse particularly post the corona pandemic.

What is Drug or Substance Addiction?

Drug addiction occurs when its abuse affects a person's work and normal family life. It creates a ripple effect in the lives of the user and his immediate circle of family, friends, co-workers, neighbours and acquaintances.

Why Punjab remains a problem?
Geographic Location:
The state's vulnerable geography makes it a hotspot for smuggling of heroin and other opioids across the border.
Declining Agricultural Wealth
Agriculture, which brought the state its wealth, is stagnating and with little industrialisation there is high unemployment present today in Punjab, which makes it a ideal breeding ground for drug industry to make inroads.
Reminiscent of Khalistan movement
In the 1980s, Punjab was in the grip of a violent separatist militancy which has now ebbed but has left its scars. Though Punjab got rid of the secessionist movement only for it to be replaced with narcotics-terrorism thus highlighting the linkages between organised crime and terrorism.

Functional challenges
The small quantity of the drugs seized by the police are clubbed under personal consumption and not as aggregators or peddlers, and this lapse is being utilised by the drug cartels which now engage small time and part time drug peddlers not only making it difficult for police to crack but also multiplying the spread.
Ludhiana as the Drug capital
As Drug usage is also directly proportional to availability of money, Ludhiana being a business hub and with the large population has led to its emergence as Drug capital in Punjab.
Further the presence of strong diaspora abroad and the remittances contributed by them increases the paying capacity of people also in rural areas.

REASONS FOR DRUG ABUSE IN INDIA
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION: India is located between the Golden Crescent (IRAN, PAKISTAN and AFGHANISTAN) and the Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam) which are the largest opium producing region globally.
LOW INCOME GROUP: Population belonging to the lower strata of the society are particularly exposed to drug abuse in India, and use these as a form of relaxation agent.
SOCIETAL PRESSURE: Most of the youth who get addicted to drug abuse is due to the fact that they start it under the peer pressure or even due to the isolation suffered at the adolescent level at the hands of parents and friends. Apart from this performance pressure, growing emptiness and changing socio-economic conditions are having a toll on the age group.
HEALTH CONDITIONS: It can also be due to mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression or even due to the high levels of stress.
POOR LAW ENFORCEMENT: Corruption among the local enforcement agencies (police) and the loopholes at the border levels have been successfully exploited by the drug cartels. There is also a shortage of staff and equipment to tackle the illicit traffic of drugs.
CURRENT ECONOMIC DOWNTURN: The economic downturn due to covid pandemic and the global recession that is following will certainly increase the trend of drug abuse in India.
GLAMOURISATION:
There has been also glamourisation of intoxication and addictive substance via social media and OTT platforms through web series.

Steps taken by Punjab to counter
- Many villages have formed their **own anti-drug committees**.
- Some **police districts have introduced gully cricke**t, while others have instructed constables to mentor addicts.
- Police personnel's are also harnessing the **power of social media**, with district police chiefs often leading these initiatives.
- The **prayer gathering at the Golden Temple** was an attempt in this direction such that the tenets of religion can be also utilised as a tool of moral suasion.

INDIAN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO FIGHT DRUG ABUSE
- **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)**: NCB is primary agency responsible for curbing trade in illicit drugs & precursor chemicals. NCB shares intelligence with other agencies like Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC), and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) for better coordination.
- NCB also take required actions to control drug trafficking under the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act of 1985. India has entered into 26 bilateral agreements to tackle the threat of drug trade.
- **Narco-Coordination Centre** was established in 2016.
- A mechanism under the NCB which was restructured in 2019 into a four-tier district-level scheme.
- **Seizure Information Management System (SIMS)** was also launched in 2019 under Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, for better coordination of all drug law enforcement agencies.
- Constitution of **National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse**
- **Project SUNRISE** was launched specially for the Northeast region to tackle rising HIV prevalence, especially among the people injecting drugs.
- **NASHA MUKT BHARAT** campaign was also launched.
- India's NCB works with several international agencies like SAARC Drug Offences Monitoring Desk, BRICS, Colombo Plan Drug Advisory Program, ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters, BIMSTEC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), among others, to combat the illicit trade of drugs.
- India is also a signatory to UN Convention on NARCOTIC DRUGS (1961), UN Convention on PSYCHOTROPIC Substances (1971), UN Convention on TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME.